

Caregiver Connection

A monthly publication for Washington State foster and adoptive families and relative caregivers produced by the Washington Department of Social and Health Services, Children's Administration and the Alliance for Child Welfare Excellence.

November 2014

"KIDS NEED ROOTS IN ORDER TO HAVE WINGS"



Those words from Spokane adoptive mom Jenn Dotts describe perfectly the need and desire children have for stability – and the desire that caregivers feel to provide it through adoption.

They are fitting for the month of November, when the state and nation celebrate new families created through adoption.

In this month's Caregiver Connection, two adopted young people talk about how adoption has affected them. Jenn tells her family's story of adoption. You can also learn how young people become legally free for adoption when the rights of their biological parents are terminated.

Washington will officially celebrate Adoption Day on Friday, November 21. Many county Superior Courts will conduct hearings to finalize adoptions and some will have celebrations. For information, go to www.courts.wa.gov/newsinfo/adoptionDay/?fa=adoptionDay.home.



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A PLACE TO CALL HOME

For 20-year-old Annah Keller of Monroe, being adopted by Chad and Rebecca Keller six years ago was transformative.

“It just changed my life dramatically,” said Annah, who earlier spent four years in foster care. “I felt like I had a place to call home, where I belonged.” When living in foster care, she had more questions and doubts than she had answers and certainty about where her life would lead.

“I would question where I would go next and what I was doing wrong,” she said. “Now, life is going really well. I feel so blessed. I feel like I am not alone.”

Both Annah and her sister Viktoriya were adopted by Chad and Rebecca.



After graduating from high school, Annah took a year off to work, save money and prepare for her future education. She now attends Cascadia Community College in Bothell.

In January, she begins a three-month mission trip in Spain, where she will be working in orphanages. “It will be challenging, both physically and mentally,” she said, then added that she is very excited to be going.

On her return, Annah will finish her associate of arts degree at Cascadia, then plans to complete her four-year degree. One possible school is a Florida college where her sister, who was adopted by a Florida family, is already a student.

Annah's future?

She is uncertain what she wants to study, but is considering becoming an adoption attorney or a social worker. She says she really likes children, and like Leanna Weston (see story below), she is a counselor at Camp To Belong Washington. She thinks her life experience helps her relate to young people who have had difficult early-life journeys. “I have a great sympathy for them because I have experienced it in a heart-wrenching way” she said. “I want to love people because I feel loved.”

She also wants those children to experience what she found with Chad and Rebecca. “I feel every kid deserves a family,” she said. “Every person needs a family to call ‘forever.’” “I’m so happy to have good people in my life.”

"I KNOW THEY WILL ALWAYS BE THERE FOR ME"

During her six years in foster care, Leanna Weston had a passion to find a forever family of her own.

The 18-year-old from Spokane finally found what she wanted when Barbara and Jesse Weston adopted her this past year.

"I was adopted at 17, and at first it was really scary because I didn't know what would happen," she said. "But it's a great feeling knowing they can't get rid of you, even if they want to," she added with a laugh.

Having an adopted family gives her the certainty and security of knowing "these people will be with me the rest of my life," she says.

Leanna went through a failed adoption four years ago, when the foster parent couldn't pass all the adoption requirements, she said. She stayed in foster care until she had her legally required transition meeting at 17 ½, when all the adults important in her life met to discuss what would happen after she turned 18.

"I told them, 'I need to be adopted,'" she said. With that, social workers and others went to work to find her a family. The result: "My process went really fast. Normally it takes about six months. Mine took three."



Leanna gives back to other young people still in the foster care system by serving as an advocate with the Mockingbird Society, a youth-based program run in Seattle that has a statewide reach. She testified on behalf of the "prudent parenting" bill that gives children in care and their caregivers greater freedom to create a more normal living situation. She is advocating

strongly within her own sibling group for her sister to be adopted. She became a counselor for the first time this year at [Camp To Belong Washington](#) that emphasizes sibling connections. Siblings come together during a week at summer camp. Leanna now is working at a low-income emergent care facility in Spokane.

If she has one message for those young people who want to be adopted – who want a better and brighter future – that message is to stand up and ask for what you want. "I encourage everybody to fight for their rights," she said.

Leanna will graduate from high school in June. Her long-term goal is to become a dentist, a goal she believes will be realized with the support and help of her new family.

“WE OPERATE FROM A PLACE OF HOPE”

For more than two years, Jenn and Willy Dotts of Spokane have been building a family through adoption. They now have two children – a six-year-old boy and an eight-year-old girl – adopted from foster care.

Jenn is clear that they are building a family, not only for themselves, but for kids who need and want the acceptance and love a family can create.

Adoption “gives kids a chance for healing,” Jenn said. “All kids need and deserve the chance to be part of a family. They need and deserve to belong.”

Jenn, who has a background in teaching, is homeschooling her children. Willy repairs laser eye equipment.

Asked what advice she would give to potential adoptive parents, Jenn is encouraging, but also realistic about the challenges. “I read so much about behaviors and what to expect.” She added, “But not everything is in the case file, and no matter what you read, you’re not going to know everything. Each kid has to be treated individually.”

She urges flexibility. If one strategy isn’t working to calm difficult behaviors, keep trying – and don’t beat yourself up when things aren’t working. She got some valuable advice from another adoptive parent and has taken it as her own: “You do the best you can at that time with the information you have.”

Of her two children, who are biological siblings, one has adapted more quickly; the other is struggling with accepting her as a mother who



wants to give unconditional love and hope. “We operate from a place of hope,” she said. “And you can almost transfer that hope to them vicariously.” But, she stressed, the process can take time. “Given their rough beginnings in life, you want to tell them and show them unconditional love.” Their acceptance also can take time: “You’re in it for the long play, obviously,” she said. “There is no other option but to move forward with hope and faith that it will work out.”

Jenn is a strong advocate for keeping brothers and sisters together when they leave their biological homes. “Sometimes, their past with each other is the only constant in their lives.” If you want to adopt, adopt sibling groups if you can,” she said. “It’s not going to be puppies and roses all the time, but if you can stay with it, and keep them together, it will make such a difference for them.”

She also said this labor of love and hope is all aimed at one goal: building happy, healthy adults. That starts with a solid foundation.

Said Jenn, “Kids need roots in order to have wings.”

WHEN PARENTAL RIGHTS ARE TERMINATED

As we commemorate National Adoption Day and Month, we celebrate the 1,390 young people who were adopted in Washington between July 1, 2013 and June 30, 2014. Most were adopted out of foster care.

About the same number – 1,417 kids – are “legally free.” That term means the parental rights of their biological parents have been terminated by a court, or the parents have voluntarily relinquished custody of their children.

Not yet adopted, these young people are waiting for their “forever family.”

Adoption can be a lengthy and complicated process, since Children’s Administration staff and judges want to be assured that the child’s best interests are served by the adoption. Judges also want to be assured that services have been offered and provided to the child’s birth parents to correct the issues that were threatening the child’s safety.

The first step: Moving the child to a safe place and establishing dependency

Children initially come into care through placement by law enforcement or by order of the court. Within 75 days, the court is expected to determine if the child should remain in care and under what conditions.

The termination process is considered after the court has determined that a child cannot be safely left with his/her parents and has ordered services for the family and child that will correct the problems that brought the child into care or that currently affect the child’s safety. For example, the parent(s) may be required to complete anger management, substance abuse and/or parenting classes. The

judge also sets a schedule for parental visits with their children to ensure contact is maintained.

The court also determines the appropriate type of placement for the child. Children’s Administration always looks for a relative to care for the child, since research has shown children often do better living with relatives. The department also looks for “suitable adults” who have a relationship with the child or family. Normally the court will only order that a foster care placement be made if no relatives or suitable adults are found.

The court makes these decisions in orders of dependency and disposition.

The next major step: Service delivery

As services are provided to the family, if parents make progress in providing a home that is safe for the child, the child is returned to the parents if this can be done safely. Many children return home, often within 60 days.



When Parental Rights Are Terminated (continued)

The progress of the family is reviewed at least every six months by the court. “It can take a long time for parents to engage in services to remedy what caused the child to be removed,” Pagni-Leavitt said.

Over the course of a child’s case, many meetings can take place. These include Shared Planning meetings, Family Team Decision meetings and court hearings. Many people are involved in discussing a child’s future including the parents (and their attorneys), caregivers, social workers, and Court-Appointed Special Advocates (CASAs) or Guardians ad Litem.

“Even if caregivers can’t attend a meeting, it’s important for them to provide information for it,” Pagni-Leavitt said.

They can send the information to the court ([caregiver forms including the Caregiver Report to the Court](#)) or to the social worker, who will provide the information to the judge. Not only do caregivers have the most current information about a child, but the child may feel more comfortable if he or she sees parents and caregivers working together. For the child, this lessens the trauma and uncertainty of divided loyalties, she said.

“Sometimes caregivers are reluctant to be in the same room with the (biological) parents,” she said. “But it’s a sign of respect if they can get together in the same room and at the same time.”

If the caregivers have qualms about meeting with the biological parents, she urges them to think of the problems that caused the removal in this way: “Think of it as though they had a disease and we all want them to get well.”

Terminating parental rights

Only if it appears that the child will not be able to a parent in the near future will the department file a petition to terminate the parents’ rights with the court. This is a separate petition process.

To terminate parental rights, a judge must

then find “clear, cogent and convincing evidence” that the department has offered or provided needed services to the family, that the parent remains unfit to care safely for the child, and that adoption is in the child’s best interests.

The court must terminate parental rights before a child is legally available for adoption. Pagni-Leavitt said the long process can create emotional distress for everyone, including caregivers who are hoping to adopt the child. But it is important for everyone to keep the child as the focus for all the actions, she said.

“People always want guarantees, and we can’t give guarantees,” she said. “The key here is we have to consider the child; support the child in every way you can, even though the child could leave at any time.”

For more information, see the brochure [“Understanding the Dependency Court Process.”](#)



PARTNER THE PARROT SAYS: REMEMBER COURT DATES!

Partner the Parrot reminds caregivers to watch for the next court date – or ask for the date from your child’s social worker – so you can provide current information to the court about how the child is doing. It’s your best chance to tell the judge – who has final say over a child’s case – what you see in the life of that child, how she/he has improved, what would help you help the child and similar information.

The court date is listed on the first page of the child’s Court Report that is given to you. You can always submit your comments in writing or come to court, although it is up to the judge who can speak at the court hearings.

You are the child’s day-to-day caregiver and have the best current information about him or her. Please share it with the court so the judge can make the best decision about the child.



MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN THE LIFE OF A CHILD IN YOUR COMMUNITY

Throughout Washington, foster parents are needed to love, coach, mentor, wipe tears, celebrate, support and encourage children and youth living outside their home due to abuse and neglect. Do you know someone who could make a difference in the life of a child? Maybe they could even deal with some teen drama! Are they ready to learn more about becoming a foster family?

Washington’s foster parent recruitment phone line, 1-888-KIDS-414, provides information and can

answer many of your questions. Take a minute to encourage your friends (or yourself if you are not licensed) to call!

Information on becoming a foster parent also is available at Children’s Administration web-site: http://www.dshs.wa.gov/ca/fosterparents/be_FosterIntro.asp

Help spread the word! Make a difference in the life of a child in your community!



KEEPING KIDS HEALTHY

It is that time of year again – flu season. We are also all concerned about the new virus that has been identified, the enterovirus D68, which has caused a number of children to enter the hospital. Both have recently been in the news.

The Early, Periodic Screening Diagnosis and Treatment Program

Caregivers with state-dependent children access regular medical check-ups through the Early Periodic Screening Diagnosis and Treatment (EPSDT) Program. ProviderOne cards come with each foster child that provide medical services to a child at no cost to the caregiver.

The program is designed to ensure children get regular checkups by medical professionals so that any potential health issues can be caught before they become serious.

“These are also called well-child exams,” said Michelle Bogart, a Children’s Administration program manager who works on medical issues. “This is a Medicaid preventive-care program that is different than when you take the children for medical care when they are sick.”

Michelle described the check-ups as very comprehensive. “They look at everything – ear, nose and throat, height, weight, immunization status – and they do a hearing and vision screening,” she said of the exams. The exam also includes an oral health check, and the child is referred to a dentist if something that needs attention.

A child is required to have an EPSDT exam within the first 30 days of coming into care. If the child is younger than a year old, he or she should have five exams annually. Children between the ages of one and three years require three exams annually, and from ages three to 21 one well-child check is required annually. If a child in care moves from one home to another, he or she is not required to have an exam within 30 days. Exams typically take between 20 and 30 minutes, Michelle said.

When a child is 12 or older, he or she is allowed to meet privately with the person doing the exam to discuss alcohol, tobacco, sex and mental health issues.

EPSDT exams also can occur for a child at times other than when they might have been scheduled, such as when a young person runs away from the home and returns.

The exams can be done by the family’s doctor or any doctor who takes Medicaid, Michelle said. They also can be performed by an Advanced Registered Practical Nurse or a Physician’s Assistant.



Being aware of enterovirus

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has confirmed the presence of [enterovirus D68 \(EV-D68\)](#) in Washington. The virus can cause serious respiratory illness, especially among children and people with underlying asthma and other lung diseases or medical conditions.

A King County child hospitalized at Seattle

Children's Hospital had respiratory illness associated with the virus. "Confirmation of this case indicates that EV-D68 is likely circulating in our community and regionally, and we could see additional cases over the coming weeks," said Dr. Jeff

Duchin, chief of communicable disease and epidemiology at Seattle and King County Public Health. "However, we can't predict at this time how severe or how long an EV-D68 outbreak might be locally. Outside of Seattle Children's Hospital, our monitoring does not show an increase in patients hospitalized for asthma in King County." Many people who get sick from EV-D68 have only mild symptoms, like a runny nose or coughing, with or without fever. However, in other people, the virus can be more severe. Parents should be watchful for any signs of wheezing or for worsening

asthma and seek medical help promptly if breathing difficulty occurs. Children and adults with asthma should take their medications as prescribed and have an asthma control plan with their health care provider. They should contact their healthcare provider promptly if asthma symptoms worsen, even after taking medications.



No specific treatment or vaccine is available for EV-D68 infections. Testing is done to determine when the virus is present in the community, but is not helpful for individual patients and is not needed or available in non-hospitalized cases. Results of the

Washington testing show that EV-D68 is not alone in causing serious respiratory illness. A variety of common cold viruses that cause uncomplicated infections in most children can cause severe disease in asthmatics and those with underlying lung diseases, he said. Although the influenza virus was not detected in children tested, flu season is just around the corner and influenza is the only viral cause of severe respiratory infections that is preventable through vaccination.

Influenza (Flu)

Influenza is a cause of widespread respiratory infections each year and is especially serious in children and adults with underlying asthma and other lung diseases and chronic medical conditions.

An annual dose of flu vaccine is the most effective way to prevent this major cause of respiratory viral illnesses and hospitalizations, and everyone should remember to get their flu shot this season.

[Flu vaccine](#) can protect against specific *types* of the influenza virus. Vaccine production is tailored each year, based on the types of flu viruses that appear most likely to cause illness during that flu season.

Flu vaccine is recommended for everyone six months of age and older. It is especially important for [high-risk groups](#), including older people, young children, pregnant women, healthcare professionals, caregivers, and people with certain medical conditions like, asthma, diabetes,



heart disease and neurological conditions.

As with any medicine, no flu vaccine is 100% effective, but it *can* help prevent severe illness, hospitalization and death. If you get the flu after being vaccinated, it will normally be a much milder and shorter illness.

Influenza spreads easily by coughing and sneezing. This respiratory virus can lead to pneumonia and heart problems. Flu also can be serious for babies and they often need to be

hospitalized if they get flu. Flu is even more serious for people of any age with chronic illnesses, even if the illness is under control. Symptoms include:

- ⊗ Fever (often over 101)
- ⊗ Headache
- ⊗ Tiredness
- ⊗ Dry cough
- ⊗ Sore throat
- ⊗ Nasal congestion
- ⊗ Muscle aches

If you or someone you know has these symptoms and they are severe, contact your healthcare provider as soon as possible.



MILEAGE

Monthly Mileage: Caregivers, it's time to submit your [Monthly Mileage form](#) to the social worker for October 2014. Your form must be turned in within three calendar months from the last day of the month your first travel took place. If you have questions about allowable mileage, use this link http://www.dshs.wa.gov/pdf/ms/forms/07_090.pdf. Please remember: CA does not reimburse for mileage over 90 days old.

CALLING ALL KIDS: MR. YUK NEEDS YOU!



Mr. Yuk, the lovable mascot of the Washington Poison Center, wants children to submit artwork for the eighth annual Statewide Poison Prevention Poster Contest.

The Washington Poison Center uses the poster contest to remind parents and children to be vigilant about poisons and drugs. The winning poster will be part of the 2015 Poison Prevention Week Campaign, celebrated during the third week in March.

"The best time to begin poison and drug education is with children, and our poster contests help increase awareness of poison safety and our free services through our 1-800-222-1222 number," said Carrie Ulvestad, interim executive director of the Center. "After all, the poison center is the best place for people to call with questions and for emergencies regarding medications, bites, stings, household products or anything that can cause poisoning."

Mr. Yuk, who has been an icon for poison safety in Washington since 1973, asks young artists to help raise poison safety awareness by creating an eye-catching poster that displays suggestions on how he helps them avoid being poisoned. The contest is open to all 6- to 12-year-olds in the state.

The top prize is \$500, a visit from Mr. Yuk to the winner's school or program, a trip to the state Capitol to meet their legislators and, of course, having the winning design featured throughout the state for Poison Prevention Week. Four runners-up will receive \$100 each. All contest participants will receive a gift from Mr. Yuk in the mail.

The poison center will accept poster entries postmarked on or before January 9th. The winner and runners-up will be announced in late February.



Infant Safety

The Children's Administration is emphasizing infant safety with all social workers. You can expect that both your licenser and children's social worker will review with you children's sleeping arrangements and how to react to the Period of Purple Crying. This is a new requirement for all social workers and caregivers.

Until this happens, you can review information through the Internet about these two important areas of child safety. For the Period of Purple Crying, visit the [National Center on Shaken Baby Syndrome web site](#). Safe sleep information for infants can be found that the [Safe to Sleep Campaign web site](#).

In addition, there will soon be on-line training specific for caregivers available. This training will be produced by the Alliance following the training for social workers.

Fostering Together Regional Recruitment and Retention Staff



Fostering Together liaisons are here to provide help and support to foster parents and relative caregivers all across Washington! Bring them your questions on training, licensing, finding resources or supports for new or challenging placements, or whenever you have a need. They are great at helping find what caregivers need. If you have questions contact those listed below for assistance – they are

here to help you. Also, check out their website for much more information, www.fosteringtogether.org, and ask about their FaceBook on-line support groups in your area – they will help you get signed in.

REGION 1 NORTH

Amber Sherman (Regional Coordinator and Spokane Liaison)	Amber-Sherman@olivecrest.org	509-499-2456
Derek Cutlip (Community Involvement)	Derek-Cutlip@olivecrest.org	509-262-0728

FOSTER PARENT LIAISONS

Kim McNaughton (Ferry, Pend Oreille, Stevens counties)	Kimberly-McNaughton@olivecrest.org	509-675-0341
Wendy White (Douglas, Chelan counties)	Wendy-White@olivecrest.org	425-422-6557
Dena Drury (Whitman, Garfield, Asotin counties)	Dena-Drury@olivecrest.org	509-288-2639
Melissa MacDougall (Okanogan county)	Melissa-MacDougall@olivecrest.org	509-322-5573
Lisa Boorman (Grant, Adams counties)	Lisa-Boorman@olivecrest.org	208-484-5725
Meaghan Flowers (Spokane, Lincoln counties)	Meaghan-Flowers@olivecrest.org	509-991-9692

REGION 1 SOUTH

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REGION 2 NORTH

Shala Crow (Regional Coordinator / Community Involvement)	Shala-Crow@olivecrest.org	360-220-3785
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FOSTER PARENT LIAISONS

Christina Urtasun (Island, San Juan, Skagit, Whatcom counties)	Christina-Urtasun@olivecrest.org	360-720-0969
Deena Parra (Support Assistant)	Deena-Parra@olivecrest.org	253-219-6782
Megan Harp (Smokey Point, Everett)	Megan-Harp@olivecrest.org	425-350-3839
Stephanie Hanson (Sky Valley)	Stephanie-Hanson@olivecrest.org	360-805-1094
JoAnne Moran (Lynnwood, Community Involvement)	Joanne-Moran@olivecrest.org	206-856-8533

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REGION 2 SOUTH

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Sheila Taie (White Center, South King county)	Sheila-Taie@olivecrest.org	206-297-7434
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REGION 3 NORTH

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Erika Thompson (Pierce county)	Erika-Thompson@olivecrest.org	206-406-2398
Althea Sanders (Pierce county Involvement)	Althea-Sanders@olivecrest.org	208-691-4502
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REGION 3 SOUTH

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Brenda Taylor (Grays Harbor, Pacific counties)	Brenda-Taylor@olivecrest.org	360-589-9383
Niki Favela (Cowlitz, Lewis, Wahkiakum counties)	Niki-Favela@olivecrest.org	708-653-8912
Kim Glover (Clark, Skamania counties)	Kim-Glover@olivecrest.org	360-433-7150

ALLIANCE FOR CHILD WELFARE STAFF

Training for current and potential new foster parents statewide is provided by [The Alliance for Child Welfare Excellence](#). Following is the Contact information for the Trainers in your Region. In addition, the [Alliance website](#) has updated training information for caregivers, along with other valuable information.

REGION	NAME	EMAIL	TELEPHONE
R1 Spokane & surrounding areas	Jan Hinkle-Rodriguez, Supervisor Leon Covington, Trainer Nancy Leigh, Traioner, Renee Siers, Trainer Amber Sherman, Registrar	janh5@uw.edu leonc44@uw.edu Leighn2@uw.edu siersr@uw.edu ttrainingregistrar@gmail.com	509-836-5499 509-363+2410 509-846-8645 509-363-3399 509-363-4821
R1 Yakima, Tri-Cities, Ellensburg & surrounding areas	Jan Hinkle-Rodriguez, Supervisor Ryan Krueger, Trainer Eileen Angier, Registrar	janh5@uw.edu krry300@uw.edu	509-836-5499 509-3585-3096 800-876-5195
R2 Bellingham, Everett, Mount Vernon & surrounding areas	Yolonda Marzest,, Supervisor El-Freda Stephenson, Trainer Emma Nierman, Trainer	ymarzest@uw.edu elfreda@uw.edu enierman@uw.edu	206-923-4955, 206-923-4922 206-923-9414,
R2 Seattle Metro Area	Yolonda Marzest,, Supervisor Julie Gelo, Trainer Joan Sager, Trainer	ymarzest@uw.edu jkg@uw.edu sagerj2@uw.edu	206-923-4955 425-339-1811, 360-738-2305, 800-396-4079,



ALLIANCE FOR CHILD WELFARE STAFF (continue...)



REGION	NAME	EMAIL	TELEPHONE
R3 Tacoma, Bremerton, Puyallup & surrounding areas	Arthur Fernandez-Scarberry, , Sup Linda Falcocchio, Trainer Luanne Hawley, ,Registrar	sart300@uw.edu falcol@uw.edu caregier.training.tacoma@gmail.com	206-276-4549, 253-983-6474, 253-881-1207
R3 Tumwater, Olympia, Centralia, Long Beach, South Bend, & surrounding areas.	Penny Michel, Trainer Linda Bales, Registrar	mpen300@uw.edu resource.family.training.r3@gmail.com	360-725-6788, 360-485-8146,
R3 Aberdeen, Forks, Port Angeles & Shelton	Bill Todd, Trainer	billtodd@uw.edu	360-565-2296
R3 Vancouver, Camas, Stevenson & Kelso	Colleen Cornman-Wilcox, Trainer Kim Glover, , Registrar	cm39@uw.edu ruregistered3@gmail.com	360-993-7991 360-326-3864